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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this booklet is to bring New York state's four signers of the Declaration of Independence back into the mainstream of American Revolutionary history. Brief biographical sketches are presented about four patriots--Philip Livingston, Lewis Morris, William Floyd, and Francis Lewis. After providing a short history of New York during the years surrounding the signing of the Declaration, the booklet illuminates the involvement of each of the signers in the Continental Congress. The document concludes with a reading list on the four men and the Declaration of Independence. (Author/ND)

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New York's Signers of the Declaration of Independence

by

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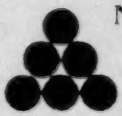

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Albany 1975

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FOREWORD

Nearly two hundred years ago, fifty-six men pledged "our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor" on behalf of the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration itself has always been treasured as the nation's birth certificate. Yet some of those who signed the document are little known to us today. This is especially true of the four members of the Second Continental Congress who signed for New York – Philip Livingston, Lewis Morris, William Floyd, and Francis Lewis. These four patriots have by and large been overshadowed by more illustrious New Yorkers such as John Jay, Philip Schuyler, and Alexander Hamilton, who earned historical reputations on the battlefield or in national politics.

In this booklet, Paul J. Scudiere, Senior Historian in the Office of State History, brings New York's signers back into the mainstream of American Revolutionary history. These four brief biographical sketches will help to reintroduce New Yorkers to the four men who were willing to risk retaliation upon themselves and their families in order that our infant American nation could be free and independent.

John H. G. Pell
Chairman
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NEW YORK AND THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

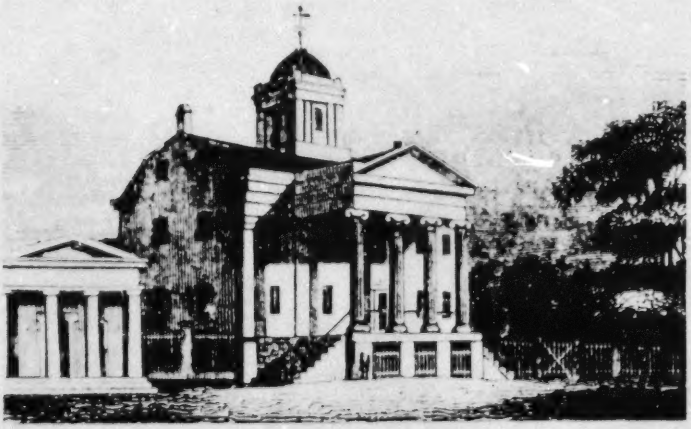
What part are we to act after this Event takes place . . .?
New York's congressional delegates in anticipation of independence.

The most important single event in the history of the American nation was the adoption of the Declaration of Independence by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776. Although New York played a key role in the winning of independence and in the establishment of American democratic government, the New York delegates then in Congress did not vote on Richard Henry Lee's resolution "that these United Colonies are and of right ought to be, free and independent states," on July 2, 1776, nor on the Declaration itself when it was considered two days later.

Earlier, on June 8, the New York delegates hurriedly wrote home: "Your Delegates here expect the question of Independence will very shortly be agitated in Congress. Some of us consider ourselves as bound by our instructions not to vote on that question. The matter will admit of no delay . . . ." Without explicit instructions from home, the New York delegates then in Philadelphia — George Clinton, Henry Wisner, John Alsop, William Floyd, and Francis Lewis — were not willing to take upon themselves the responsibility for the ultimate revolutionary act. Fortunately New York's vote was not necessary. The American colonies declared their independence from Great Britain on July 4. Thus, it remained for New York's fourth and last Provincial Congress to officially accept independence when the Declaration finally came before it on July 9 at White Plains. It was, therefore, an anticlimax in the drama of independence when, later that summer, Philip Livingston, Lewis Morris, William Floyd, and Francis Lewis signed

their names to the parchment Declaration on behalf of the state of New York.

Despite New York's seemingly belated official sanction of the Declaration of Independence, it cannot be said that the state's patriots were any less committed to the cause of liberty than were their countrymen. Many New Yorkers were quite willing to be counted among the friends of independence. In mid-May, 1776, young Gouverneur Morris of Westchester had advocated independence and had received considerable support in the Third Provincial Congress. Robert R. Livingston of Dutchess County had served alongside Thomas Jefferson on the committee that drafted the instrument of independence itself. When the actual debate over national independence arose during the summer of 1776, however, New Yorkers were distracted by events closer to home. By mid-1776, New York had already witnessed much bloodshed. New York soldiers had participated in the invasion of Canada late in 1775, and in 1776 the state was preparing itself for a full-scale British invasion from both the north and south. Thus, few New Yorkers had time to worry about events in Philadelphia, and the delegates to the Continental Congress from New York attended sessions only sporadically throughout the summer of 1776.



The courthouse at White Plains where New York's Provincial Congress officially recognized the Declaration of Independence, July 9, 1776. From Robert Bolton, History of the . . . County of Westchester.

In time, however, four New Yorkers did manage to sign the Declaration on behalf of New York. Philip Livingston, Lewis Morris, William Floyd, and Francis Lewis were representative of New York's political, social, and economic upper crust. Oddly enough, they became the only New Yorkers to sign the Declaration primarily because they were among those who could most safely take leave from responsibilities in New York. Other, better known delegates such as George Clinton, John Jay, and Philip Schuyler could not be spared from critical military and governmental obligations at home to return to Philadelphia in August merely to sign the document. This should not minimize the importance of the efforts of Livingston, Morris, Floyd, and Lewis, however. It was imperative that New York's delegates in Philadelphia be men of intelligence and that they be totally committed to the cause of American liberty. The selection of these four was therefore a vote of confidence in their importance. Yet signing the Declaration has not assured any of these men a place of prominence in history. Almost nothing has been written about New York's signers as individuals. These brief biographies of the four New Yorkers who actually signed the treasonous document produced by the Second Continental Congress will hopefully fill part of this gap in the history of revolutionary New York.

PHILIP LIVINGSTON

Philip Livingston is a great, rough, rapid mortal.
There is no holding any conversation with him.

John Adams, 1774

Of the four New Yorkers who signed the Declaration of Independence, the most prominent was Philip Livingston. He was born in 1716 into a wealthy and politically powerful family. The Livingstons had not always been wealthy and important. Philip's grandfather, Robert, was born in Scotland and came to America by way of the Netherlands where, as an adolescent, he acquired a knowledge of business and of the Dutch language. He first came to Albany on business in 1674, and, liking the commercial environment, decided to stay. Robert married Alida Schuyler, widow of Nicholas Van Rensselaer, thus allying himself with two of the oldest and wealthiest Dutch families in the province.

The marriage introduced Livingston into the inner circles of provincial politics and society. He further enhanced his position by making himself useful to colonial governors. He lent them money and served as a military provisioner. He also managed to ingratiate himself with the Iroquois, subsequently providing the liaison between the English government and the Five Nations. By the time of Robert Livingston's death in 1728, he had established an estate of some 160,000 acres (called Livingston Manor) on the east bank of the Hudson River in what is now Columbia County. He also left his descendants a legacy of involvement in the public affairs of New York.

Philip Livingston's father, also named Philip, was born in 1680. He was raised in the fashion of the colonial gentry. At the age of twenty-five, he married Catherine Van Brugh, the daughter of a former mayor of Albany. A Livingston family tradition of

intermarriage with important Dutch families was becoming established. Philip studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1719. From his father, Philip had learned the importance of befriending royal governors. He thus provided service, advice, and financial assistance to various provincial executives. Like his father, he was appointed secretary to the Albany Indian commissioners and was made a member of the governor's council in 1725. By the time of Philip Livingston's death in 1749, his family ranked as one of the foremost in the province.

Philip Livingston, signer of the Declaration, was born in 1716. He inherited the Livingston tradition of political activism. This third generation Livingston also acquired a taste for radical political ideas. It was probably at Yale College, where he and his three brothers (Robert, Peter Van Brugh, and William) were educated, that young Philip was introduced to radical English Whiggery. English radical writers such as Thomas Gordon and John Trenchard pushed to extremes the concepts of rights and liberties found in the work of more moderate Whigs such as John Locke. Yale College, a bastion of colonial political and religious dissent, was a logical place for extreme ideas to be incubated and then disseminated throughout the colonies.

After graduation from Yale in 1737, Philip Livingston began to establish himself as a merchant in New York City. In 1740 he married Christina, the daughter of Colonel Dirck Ten Broeck. Once again, the Livingstons had intermarried with the New York Dutch. The newlyweds made their home in a comfortable townhouse on Duke Street in New York City and also maintained an estate at Brooklyn Heights, overlooking New York harbor. During the French and Indian War (1754-1763), Philip added to his family's fortune in many ways, but especially through privateering. A speculator in privateering could normally expect to double his investment, and at one point, Livingston owned shares in six privateering vessels. Philip Livingston apparently was not above winking at the law for profit, since he was also part owner of the ship *Tartar* which was involved in illicit wartime trade with Spanish and French ports in the West Indies.

It was during these war years that the successful New York merchant began to take an active interest in politics. New York City elected him to the General Assembly in 1759, where he served for the next ten years. After 1763, Parliament began to tighten colonial trade regulations and to tax the colonies through such

devices as the Sugar Act and the Stamp Act. When in 1765 Lieutenant Governor Cadwallader Colden urged the New York Assembly to accept the stamp tax, Philip Livingston took the floor of the Assembly. Describing the impending revenue measure as "alarming news," he asked Colden to "join us in an endeavor to secure that great badge of English liberty, of being taxed only with our own consent, to which we conceive all His Majesty's subjects at home and abroad equally entitled to [*sic*]." Livingston's arguments in principle were sound, but it should not be overlooked that he, like many other colonial merchants, had stretched the limits of the law during the war.

British efforts to tighten control of colonial trade continued despite colonial protests. By 1769, a majority of the members in the New York Assembly had refused to comply with Britain's new imperial strictures. Although relations between Governor Sir Henry Moore and the Livingstons had ordinarily been friendly, the governor was forced to dissolve the Livingston-dominated Assembly for its opposition to crown desires. The governor managed to secure a majority of supporters in the election which followed. Philip Livingston was defeated for reelection as a representative from New York City. He was also refused permission by the newly-elected body to take a seat as the representative of Livingston Manor. With the supporters of the governor firmly in control of the Assembly, opposition to Parliament would subsequently have to find an outlet through extralegal means.

Even though the years between 1770 and 1774 were relatively peaceful, the colonial protest was far from dead. In fact, some colonial protesters were planning to revive it in a violent form. In December 1773, some New Englanders disguised as Indians boarded a ship bearing tea from the East India Company and threw the tea into Boston harbor. The Boston Tea Party soon became famous. At the same time, the Boston radicals issued a call for an intercolonial congress to organize a unified colonial protest against British actions. In early 1774, Parliament responded to the Boston Tea Party with harsh measures directed against Massachusetts; Boston harbor was closed, martial law enacted, and town meetings suspended. Dubbed the "Intolerable Acts" by the colonists, these measures provided the springboard to revolution.

New York's "Sons of Liberty" (the counterparts of the Boston radicals) approved of the call for a congress and applauded Boston's forceful approach to the solution of colonial problems. But wealthy

merchants like Philip Livingston were alarmed. They feared that the control of the protest in New York City might fall by default to extremists of the Boston strip if more moderate men did not assert their own authority. Thus, merchants such as Livingston, along with lawyers and other moderates in New York City, made an effort to gain control of the rapidly developing revolutionary movement. In May 1774, these moderates formed a "committee of fifty-one," partly for the purpose of corresponding with the other colonies on matters of mutual interest but also to insure that extremists did not gain the upper hand. Included on this committee were Philip Livingston and his brother Peter. (Francis Lewis, another future signer of the Declaration of Independence, also served on this committee.) When a decision was made to hold the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia, the Committee of Fifty-One selected Isaac Low, James Duane, John Alsop, John Jay and Philip Livingston—all moderate men—to represent New York City. This slate of delegates was endorsed by the other counties, which also added William Floyd (another future signer), Simon Boerum, John Haring, and Henry Wisner.

It was perhaps ironic that Philip Livingston was found among the leaders of the growing rebellion. In the eyes of the English, Livingston may have appeared radical. But, in fact, Livingston feared above all that extremists might ultimately turn the protest against Britain into a full-fledged social revolution. As John Adams said after meeting with Livingston in the spring of 1774, "Philip Livingston is a great, rough rapid mortal. There is no holding any conversation with him. He blusters away; says if England should turn us adrift, we should instantly go to civil war among ourselves." Ironically, Livingston and many other moderates were being forced to take leading roles in the mounting colonial protest, if for no other reason than to control it. Like others, Livingston was trying to ride the tiger.

Moderates dominated the First Continental Congress. Generally they were men who abhorred violence, but who were willing to use every other means to force England to reverse the measures which the colonies objected to. Hoping to resolve the crisis without war, the First Congress concentrated on drafting addresses to the people of Great Britain and to the inhabitants of Canada. It also agreed to support the intercolonial nonimportation association against British goods.

To the disappointment of Livingston and his moderate colleagues, England ignored the addresses and denounced the nonimportation association. A Second Continental Congress was set for May 1775. The New York Assembly (which had earlier refused to take responsibility for sending delegates to the First Continental Congress) now ignored the call for selecting delegates to a second Congress. Once again, the decision to send delegates fell to an extralegal committee, this time, the Committee of Sixty.

The Committee of Sixty, a successor to the Committee of Fifty-One, had been organized to administer nonimportation in New York. Under the auspices of the Committee of Sixty, forty-one delegates representing nine counties assembled in April of 1775 to choose a New York congressional delegation. Philip Livingston acted as presider. All the delegates to the First Continental Congress (with the exception of Isaac Low, who refused to serve) were reelected. The delegation was expanded to include Philip Schuyler, George Clinton, Francis Lewis, Lewis Morris, and Robert R. Livingston, Jr., Philip's cousin. Prior to the departure of the delegates for Philadelphia, the Committee of Sixty was expanded to one hundred in order to broaden its support. With this done, the Committee of One Hundred then elected representatives to New York's Provincial Congress, another extralegal body created to fill the vacuum left by the disintegration of the royal government. Philip and his brother Peter were both members of the Committee of One Hundred, and Philip, besides continuing to attend the Continental Congress, was also elected a delegate to the Provincial Congress.

As a member of both the Second Continental Congress and New York's Provincial Congress, Livingston was forced to divide his time between establishing a new colonial government and organizing New York's defenses. Violence had erupted in the Massachusetts towns of Lexington and Concord in April 1775, and it would be only a matter of time until the military action reached New York. Throughout the rest of 1775 and the early months of 1776, the situation in New York remained tense. During the debates in the Continental Congress over independence in the spring and early summer of 1776, Livingston remained at home in New York. He did not play a part in the adoption of the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia, but he was an active participant in its acceptance by the New York Provincial Congress on July 9, 1776. But at the end of July, when British invasion of New York was imminent, Livingston hurriedly left New York for Philadelphia. His abrupt departure apparently

angered John Jay who commented, "The ways of some men like Solomons serpent on a rock are past finding out." Philip arrived in Philadelphia in time to sign the engraved version of the Declaration on August 2, 1776.

For the next two years, Livingston continued to shuttle between Philadelphia and the new state of New York. In Congress he served on the Committee on Indian Affairs, the Treasury Board, the Marine Committee, and the Commerce Committee. In 1777, he was elected to the state senate, but after attending its opening sessions in Kingston, he returned to the meetings of the Second Continental Congress, temporarily being held in York, Pennsylvania. Old and tired, it soon became obvious that he was in poor health. Livingston died in York, Pennsylvania, on June 11, 1778.

Philip Livingston remained a moderate until his death. A prominent merchant and respected citizen, he was not instrumental in the movement toward independence. However, once the Declaration of Independence was adopted, Livingston accepted the responsibilities that independence entailed. He earnestly believed that the control of affairs should be in the hands of wealthy men such as himself and should not be surrendered to those of lesser stature and experience. Livingston gave generously of his private fortune, pledging his personal credit to maintain public confidence in the Continental Congress. Ironically, the aging merchant had to sell property shortly before his death to preserve his own credit. He was not a warm man; he was too dignified and austere to arouse a popular following or to develop warm personal friendships. But Livingston epitomized a very important class of revolutionary leaders, men of wealth and stature who feared that they themselves might be destroyed by the Revolution but who nevertheless faithfully served the cause of independence once that course had been decided upon.

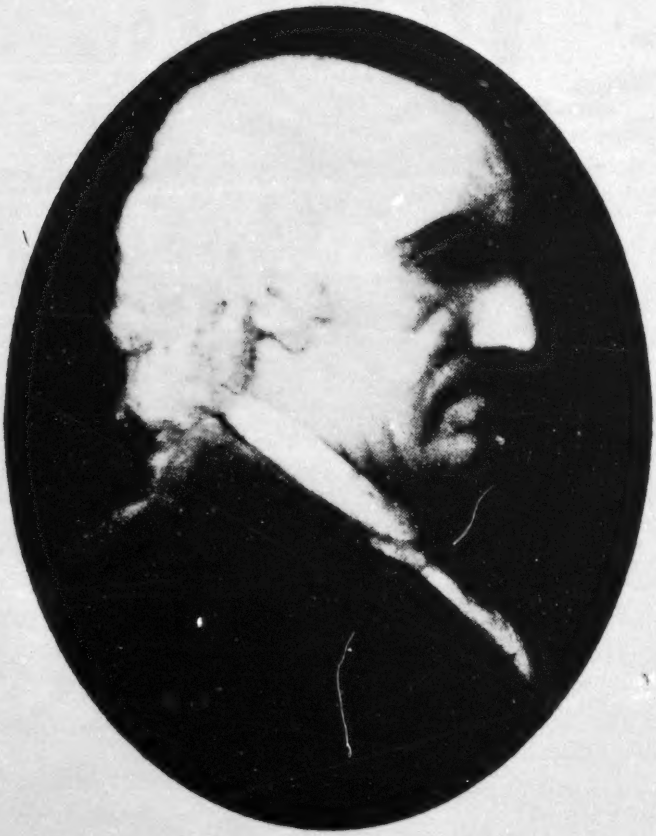
LEWIS MORRIS

[The American troops appear to be] retreating to King's Bridge; if so, Morrisania will fall of course.

Lewis Morris Jr. to his father,
September 6, 1776

Lewis Morris, like Philip Livingston, was a child of the New York aristocracy. His great-uncle, also named Lewis, and his great-grandfather Richard had been officers in Oliver Cromwell's army during the English Revolution of the 17th century. Both men fled England at the time of Charles II's restoration in 1660. Richard first settled in Barbadoes and then moved to New York, while Lewis went directly to New Jersey. The two brothers acquired land in their respective colonies, and in 1673, when Richard died, Lewis became administrator of his 3000 acre estate in Westchester County, New York. This estate was accorded manorial rights in 1692 by New York's governor, Benjamin Fletcher. The new manor which was called Morrisania became the Morris family seat for the next three generations.

Lewis Morris III was born at Morrisania in 1726. He was tutored at home, and, at the age of sixteen, entered Yale College. There, like Philip Livingston a decade earlier, Morris became aware of radical English concepts of liberty and politics. Morris graduated in 1746. Barely twenty years old and with little taste for commerce or the law, he returned to his father's estate and became a gentleman farmer. Not long after his graduation, he married Mary Walton, an attractive and wealthy heiress from a prominent New York City family. This marriage produced four daughters and six sons, three of whom eventually served as officers in the American Revolution.



Lewis Morris (1726-1798)

Painted by Charles Noel Flagg after a painting by John Trumbull. Reproduced courtesy of Independence National Historical Park.

After inheriting the family estate in 1762, Morris became increasingly involved in politics. In 1769, he was elected to represent the Town of Westchester in New York's Provincial Assembly. From this base he began to criticize British imperial policy, aiming his strongest barbs at the provincial officials who attempted to enforce it. A number of his constituents took exception to Morris's attacks on crown policies, and some of them attributed Morris's hostility toward the crown government to his resentment over not

receiving adequate patronage. Morris's enemies soon gained the upper hand. When the Assembly met, Morris, like Philip Livingston, was denied his seat on the basis of nonresidence.

After his ejection from the Assembly, Morris returned to his manor at the southern end of Westchester County. His political career was not over, however. In 1775, he persuaded a number of local political leaders to meet at White Plains for the purpose of choosing Westchester's representatives to New York's Provincial Convention. Supporters of the royal government tried to dominate this gathering and to block action on the question, but Morris spearheaded support for the sending of a delegation. He secured his own appointment as chairman of the delegation, and seven of his supporters were chosen as delegates. Once at the Convention, the question of whether or not to send a provincial delegation to the Second Continental Congress was to be decided. Morris supported the successful resolution to send a delegation to Philadelphia, and was himself appointed a delegate. In May 1775 he took his seat in the Second Continental Congress.

Lewis Morris was an unlikely supporter of rebellion. He was a rural patrician, accustomed to exercising authority. Like Philip Livingston, he was fearful of the political and social upheaval which might be triggered if the colonial protest got out of hand. Yet in 1765 he had joined the protest over the passage of the Stamp Act, even though, as a gentleman farmer, it did not have any particular economic impact on him. He had protested when New York's newspapers were shut down for printing news of the Stamp Act in the form of an obituary. Later, during his brief tenure in the Assembly in 1769, he had joined Philip Livingston in opposing the supplying of British troops garrisoned in New York.

It is still not clear why a man of Morris's standing participated in activities that led to rebellion. Even though earlier generations of Morrises had sometimes opposed royal governors (especially Lewis Morris III's grandfather), the father of Lewis Morris III had been politically apathetic and had prospered under crown rule. He had even tried to discourage his son from taking an active part in politics.

But when Lewis Morris II died in 1762, Lewis Morris III became lord of Morrisania, and he was not content to continue living the life of a politically indifferent landlord. For years he had suppressed his interest in politics because of his father's wishes. Now,

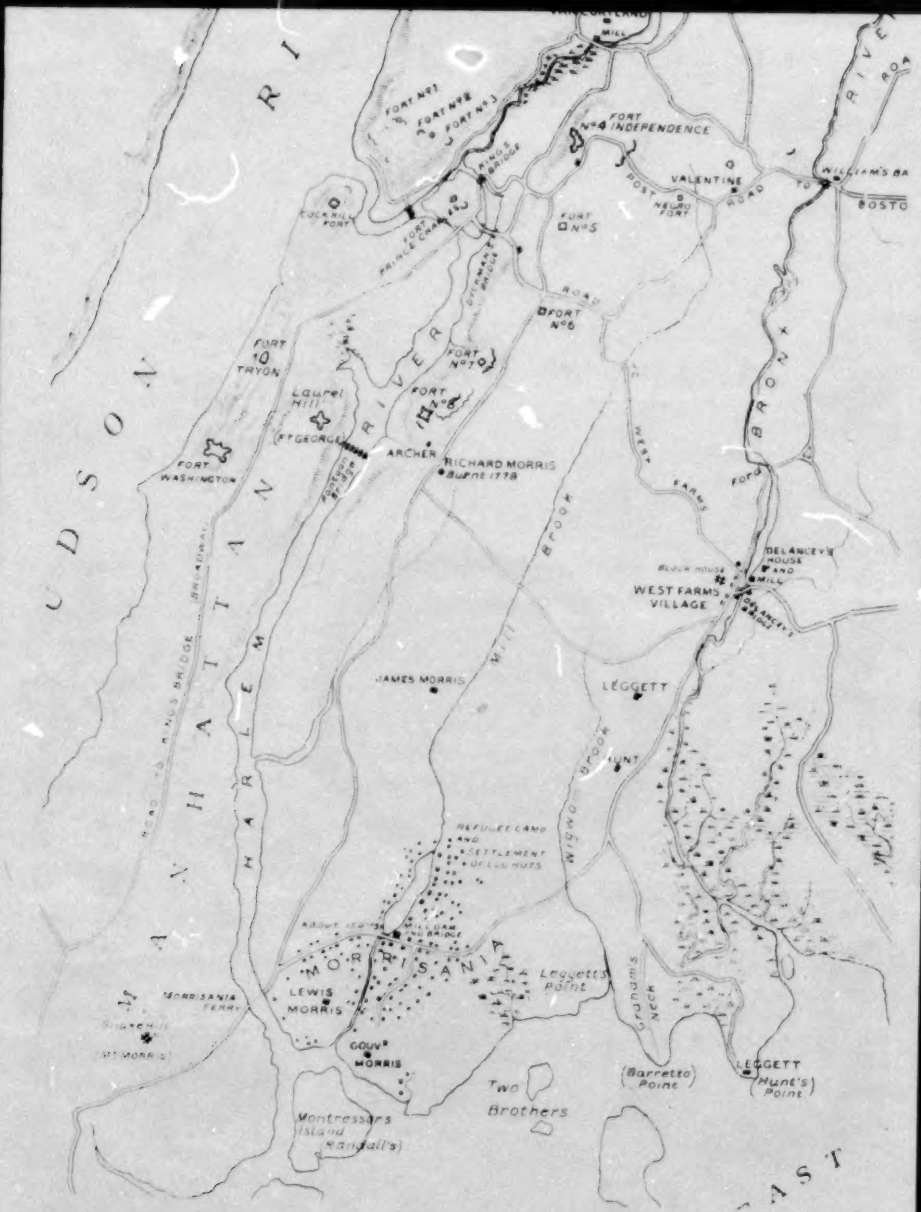
with his inheritance firmly in hand, he became politically active. And like Philip Livingston, he believed that whatever direction the mounting colonial protest should take, it should be guided by men of wealth and stature such as himself.

Morris plunged into his work enthusiastically. Elected to represent New York in the Second Continental Congress which met in the spring of 1775, Morris went to Philadelphia and concentrated on the administrative problems of sustaining what was now becoming a full-fledged rebellion. He was assigned to a committee responsible for selecting strategic locations to defend in New York, and to another concerned with military supplies. Much of his time was consumed with the tedious but important work of purchasing tent cloth, encouraging production of sulphur and saltpeter, and acquiring gunpowder. He also served as a member of the permanent committee on Indian affairs.

In June 1776, the New York Provincial Congress made Morris a brigadier general and placed him in command of the Westchester County militia. He immediately left the Second Continental Congress to assume his command in New York. Lewis was thus absent from Philadelphia when the Declaration of Independence was adopted. However, he was present at White Plains on July 9 when the action of the Continental Congress was ratified by New York's Fourth Provincial Congress. On August 2, the engraved, official version of the Declaration was ready to be signed by the delegates at Philadelphia, but Morris was still in New York. Not until early September was he able to go to Philadelphia to add his signature.

When the British occupied New York City in September of 1776, Lewis Morris, like other New Yorkers, found his family and property in great danger. Since Westchester County was in close proximity to New York City, the newly organized county militia could not defend the area against British and Tory raiding parties. Morrisania suffered from the devastation that hit Westchester County; British and Tory raiding parties looted the manor house and confiscated stock and timber. Fortunately, Lewis Morris was able to evacuate his family to Philadelphia before Morrisania was sacked.

With his family safe in Philadelphia, Morris returned to lead his Westchester militia regiment. Sometime during the fall of 1776, he committed an act that has cast a shadow on his historical reputation. Morris has been granted a few days leave to see his family



This map of what is now parts of Manhattan, Westchester and Bronx counties reveals how exposed Morrisania was to British depredations once the American army departed from Manhattan Island across King's Bridge. (See top of map.) From Hufeland, Westchester County during The American Revolution, 1775-1783.

in Philadelphia upon the promise to return promptly to his regiment. Instead of a few days, his stay ran into weeks. Morris's behavior provoked comment in Westchester County, and the New York Convention (the title it was given after the adoption of the Declaration of Independence) ordered him to return to his regiment. Morris defended his actions by declaring: "Since my arrival at Philadelphia the state of New York has had no more than a token representation in Congress, and as the Gentlemen of the Committee for Indian Affairs were mostly out of town, the whole of that necessary business has Devolved upon me."

The state Convention did not accept Morris's explanation. Even though he was a duly elected delegate to the Continental Congress, his behavior was viewed as an attempt to avoid his responsibility as commander of the Westchester County militia. He was once again ordered to return to New York. Reluctantly, he obeyed the Convention's order. Morris was not a coward. Like many, he suffered fear and loneliness, and was pushed to the verge of hopelessness by a war which seemingly offered little prospect for success. He was frustrated because his militia regiment could do nothing to prevent the devastation of his home county.

Despite his partial disgrace, the episode did not end Morris's public career. He served as a county judge in Westchester from May 1777 to February 1778. He also served several terms in the New York State Senate, and he was a member of the State Council of Appointment, which was created to keep the popularly elected state legislature from exercising too much control over appointments. For the remainder of the war, Morris was forced to divide his time between civil and military responsibilities, with his non-military duties commanding most of his time. After the peace treaty in 1783, Morris was able to retire from his military duties with the rank of major general of militia.

With the return of peace, Morris was faced with the task of rebuilding his plundered estate. Although it took him years to recover financially from the sacking of Morrisania, Lewis did not spend all of his time recouping his losses, but remained in public life as well. He served as a member of the first Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York in 1784. He also joined Alexander Hamilton in promoting ratification of the federal Constitution in 1788.

Before his death in 1798, Lewis Morris III had restored his fortune and Morrisania. Dr. Benjamin Rush of Philadelphia called

Lewis Morris "A cheerful, amiable man and a most disinterested patriot . . . He suffered the loss of many thousand pounds by the degradations of the British army upon his property near New York without repining. Every attainment of his heart yielded to his love of his country."

WILLIAM FLOYD

[I]s New York to be evacuated as well as Long Island without fighting . . .?

William Floyd to N.S., August 1776

William Floyd, like Philip Livingston and Lewis Morris, was a member of a wealthy, landowning family. The eldest son of Nicoll and Tabitha Floyd, William was born at Mastic, on eastern Long Island, in 1734. Floyd's great-grandfather Richard had emigrated from Wales in the seventeenth century and had settled on Long Island. Over the years, the Floyd family estate grew and flourished. Nicoll Floyd, a respected Suffolk County landholder, apparently placed little value on formal education and was more concerned with teaching his son, William, the intricacies of estate management. As a result, William had had only limited formal schooling when his father died in 1752. Yet, at the age of eighteen, young Floyd inherited the family estate and assumed the responsibilities of a landed proprietor.

As a wealthy landowner, William Floyd acquired stature and influence in his community. He lived in the fashion of an English provincial gentleman, dividing his time between the management of his estate and attendance at social functions and sporting events. His hospitality was famous. He also displayed good managerial ability. Floyd employed skilled laborers and indentured servants, and like many New Yorkers, he also kept Negro slaves. He owned as many as twelve bondsmen, a number which attests to his wealth. Ability, wealth, and excellent connections gave Floyd an increasingly prominent role in the politics of eastern Long Island.

Like many eastern Long Islanders, the Floyd family had strong ties to Connecticut. They could visit this neighboring colony across Long Island Sound in less time than they could travel to New York City. And like the majority of Connecticut inhabitants, the Floyds

were Congregationalists. Connecticut's Governor, Jonathan Trumbull, had borrowed money from William's father, and the Floyd family had both relatives and friends in Middletown, Connecticut.

It was probably through these extensive connections with the volatile politics and religion of Connecticut that eastern Long Islanders such as the Floyds developed a reputation throughout the rest of New York colony for being as ungovernable as New Englanders. Throughout the early revolutionary ferment, men such as William Floyd tended to follow the lead of the troublemaking New Englanders rather than adopting the more restrained and legalistic approach of most other New Yorkers. Thus, by the summer of 1774, when the harsh British reaction to the Boston Tea Party provoked hostility from the rest of New York province, the anti-British attitudes of eastern Long Islanders had been long since established.

This was the setting in which William Floyd lived and worked. As a prominent citizen of the Town of Brookhaven, of which Mastic was a part, Floyd was active in town affairs. Three times elected a trustee of the town, he also found time to serve as an officer in the local militia. However, when the French and Indian War broke out, Floyd did not take an active part. Instead, he concentrated on managing his estate and participating in local politics. In 1769 he won election to the provincial Assembly. This election brought Floyd into the arena of colonial politics.

Floyd's service in the Assembly was not marked by notable achievements, but he did become acquainted with political figures from other parts of the colony and soon learned a great deal about colonial affairs. As a result, when Suffolk County chose delegates to the First Continental Congress in 1774, Floyd was an obvious selection. He had been an early supporter of the intercolonial congress inspired by Massachusetts, and he had five years of experience in provincial affairs.

Although Floyd's service in the First Continental Congress was not conspicuous, he did join in the protest against the Intolerable Acts by supporting the boycott of British goods. He was also chosen as a delegate to the Second Continental Congress in April 1775. Later in the year, he was appointed colonel of the western regiment of the Suffolk County militia. For the next year, Floyd, like Lewis Morris, divided his time between his political and military responsibilities, with the latter taking most of his energy. He attended the opening session of the Second Continental

Congress at Philadelphia in May 1775, but immediately returned to his regiment and remained with it until September.

On paper, Floyd commanded thirteen companies, a total of 1,030 officers and men. During the summer of 1775, Colonel Floyd reported that "the Regiment is about two thirds furnished with bayonets and the others are getting them as fast as they can get them made; they are furnished with half pound of powder and two pound of ball per man, and a magazine in the Regiment to furnish them with about as much more when it shall be wanted, they are pretty industrious in fixing their accoutrements, and I hope in a short time they will be tolerably well-prepared." As it turned out, Floyd's expectations proved to be too optimistic. Like most other colonial militia companies, Floyd's regiment never approached full strength. One of the captains of Floyd's regiment noted with some sarcasm that "General [Nathaniel] Woodhull and Colonel Floyd . . . told the Officers that they need not be exact about the number [of militiamen] and from that the Officers have done nothing about completing their compliment."

As a delegate to the Continental Congress, Floyd tried to keep New York's Provincial Congress informed of congressional actions on such things as reconciliation with Britain, treatment of loyalists, Indian affairs, issuance of paper money, establishment of local military defense aid to the Continental army, and the everlasting problem of military supply. Floyd was present at Congress during most of the debate over independence, but he was characteristically quiet. Edmund Rutledge, a delegate from South Carolina, included Floyd among the "good men who never quit their chairs," implying that Floyd rarely spoke on the floor. Floyd's silence was partly due to New York's reluctance to give instructions to its delegates, but it also stemmed from his personal reluctance to participate in public debate. When the New York Provincial Congress finally approved the Declaration of Independence and the official parchment version of the Declaration was prepared, Floyd signed it on August 2, 1776.

While Floyd was attending the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, British General Sir William Howe landed three divisions on Long Island. The resulting seizure of Long Island in late August was a major defeat for the Americans, and Floyd feared for the safety of his family and his colony. News from New York during the takeover was sketchy and conflicting. Floyd wondered what had become of his commanding officer, General Woodhull, and

whether the New York Provincial Congress (now the state Convention) was still able to govern.

News that Long Island had been surrendered without a battle soon reached Philadelphia, and Floyd was angered. A short time before, he had written from Philadelphia: "[I]s New York to be evacuated as well as Long Island without fighting, or will our army like the Ravens of Old consider the invaluable prize for which they are contending and with their fortitude attack the enemy wherever they can find them?"

Personal news from the disaster was only partially reassuring. Woodhull had been captured and then died under mysterious conditions. Floyd's estate had been looted by British troops. Farm implements and livestock were stolen, and Floyd's extensive timberlands were razed. His country home was occupied by British cavalry, who shared it with their horses. Nothing could be done to stop the devastation. Floyd's petitions to the British to rescue his personal effects from the estate, supported by Governor Trumbull of Connecticut, were ignored. Fortunately, he did not have to worry about his family's safety. His wife, Isabella, and their three children had managed to bury the family silver and had escaped across the sound to Middletown, Connecticut.

In 1777, Floyd was elected to the state Senate from the Southern District under the first state constitution. Like Morris, he served on the Council of Appointment, and often presided over the Senate in the absence of the lieutenant governor. In January 1779, the New York Legislature sent Floyd back to the Continental Congress, where he was joined by his family in April. It was in Philadelphia that Isabella Floyd died in 1781.

The British departed from New York City in 1783, and American independence was secure. Floyd returned to his Long Island estate to find ransacked buildings, desolate fields, uprooted trees, and burned fences. He spent the entire summer making his house livable and trying to restore his life as a gentleman farmer. In 1784, Floyd married Joanna Strong of Setauket, who bore him two daughters.

Floyd continued to represent New York in the Continental Congress under the Articles of Confederation. During the debates over the adoption of the federal Constitution of 1787, Floyd was among those who supported adoption, even though most of Suffolk County opposed the national governmental structure it would create. In spite of differences of opinion between Floyd and

his constituents, he was elected to represent Suffolk County in the federal House of Representatives after the Constitution was adopted. The fledging United States Congress held its first meeting in New York City on March 4, 1789. Over the years, Floyd had grown impatient with politics. Two months after taking his seat, he complained: "I have been here now upward of two months and Congress were formed near a month before I came, and . . . we have not yet passed a Single Law."

Unhappiness over the actions of George Washington and Alexander Hamilton and a contrasting personal and ideological admiration for Thomas Jefferson caused Floyd to shift from the Federalist to the Democratic-Republican party. A decade after the end of the war, Floyd had apparently grown to believe that American liberty was in jeopardy. In 1790 he wrote, "[W]e shall soon find that we have very little liberty left and as to property there will not be much of that but what will be wanted in the public treasury to satisfy that monstrous load of debt which our rulers are bringing upon our country. . . ." With all the enthusiasm of a convert, Floyd went so far as to say that the Federalist party was the enemy of liberty in the United States.

Floyd's partisanship cost him his seat in Congress. He lost the 1791 congressional election to the Federalist candidate, and was an unsuccessful candidate for lieutenant governor in 1795, this time losing to John Jay. Age sixty-one at this last defeat, Floyd sought to retire from public affairs. He owned a large tract of land in present day Oneida County, and he settled there permanently in 1803. William Floyd lived with his family on his Oneida County farm, serving only one brief term in the state Senate. He died in 1821, but had lived long enough to see his son, Colonel Nicoll Floyd, elected to the New York Assembly, and his daughter, Ann, marry George Clinton, the son of New York's first governor.

The public career of William Floyd can be summarized by a quotation from his old adversary John Jay concerning Floyd's service in the Continental Congress. "Colonel Floyd's conduct while here gained him much respect," Jay wrote. "He moved on steady uniform principles, and appeared always to judge for himself which, in my opinion, is one very essential qualification in a delegate, and absolutely necessary to prevent his being a mere tool of factions."

FRANCIS LEWIS

Mr. Lewis has taken flight toward that Place in quest of his family, that were on Long Island . . . .

General Lewis Morris to John Jay after the British occupation of Long Island, August 1776.

In 1776, Francis Lewis was the oldest member of the New York delegation to the Second Continental Congress. He was born in Wales in 1713, the only child of Amy Pettingal of Caernarvon and the Reverend Francis Lewis, rector of the Anglican Church in Llandaff, Glamorganshire. Orphaned before the age of five, Lewis was raised in the care of an aunt and uncle. Lewis's foster parents took their responsibility seriously. They sent him to the Westminster School in London, but when Lewis showed little interest or aptitude for scholarship, he was placed in a London mercantile house as an apprentice clerk. There he learned the practical ways of the business world.

At the age of twenty-one, Lewis received title to some land that had been held in trust for him. Since he had no interest in farming, he sold the land and decided to move himself and his capital to the colonies. He departed from the usual trading practice by hoping that high-priced goods could find a market in the colonies. Thus he invested his money in expensive cloth, and set sail for New York in 1738. However, Lewis had miscalculated the colonial market. He found himself stranded in New York City with most of his money tied up in merchandise no one wanted to buy.

Fortunately, Edward Annesley, an experienced and prosperous New York merchant, took a liking to Lewis. He recognized the young Welshman's potential, and advised him to move his goods to the larger Philadelphia market. The advice was sound. Lewis soon sold his cargo at a profit, and the friendship between

Annesley and Lewis blossomed into a partnership. Their relationship was further strengthened when Lewis married Annesley's attractive sister, Elizabeth, in June 1745.

As the Annesley-Lewis partnership prospered, the young merchant earned the friendship and respect of important and wealthy men, including some high British colonial officials. After the declaration of war against the French in 1756, Lewis benefited from his governmental connections by being named one of the supply agents for British forces in northern New York. In that capacity (and because he was a personal friend of the English commander), Lewis was invited to visit Fort Ontario at Oswego in 1756. The visit was disastrous. The fort was seized in a surprise attack by French troops and their Indian allies. Lewis was captured and spent the remainder of the war as a prisoner, not returning to New York City until 1763. Even the misfortune of imprisonment was turned to profit, however, since the colonial government gave Lewis as compensation 5,000 acres in present-day Whitestone, Queens.

In 1765, having accumulated a considerable fortune, the fifty-two year old merchant began to take a less active role in mercantile activities. Lewis's energies began to be directed toward public affairs. As a citizen, Lewis was a loyal Englishman; but as a merchant, he was infuriated by parliamentary acts which were opposed by the mercantile community. As a result, he actively protested British trade restrictions in the 1760s. As a member of the Stamp Act Congress in 1765, Lewis called the Act "one of the greatest evils ever perpetrated on free men." In 1768, he advocated nonimportation of British goods as a method of counteracting parliamentary trade restrictions.

After 1768, Francis Lewis was an active participant in acts which were leading toward rebellion. He achieved his entrance into the revolutionary movement by associating himself with the Sons of Liberty and other dissident groups which appealed particularly to New York City's tradesmen and mechanics. Throughout the late 1760s and into the early 1770s, Lewis worked with these organizations, using his personal fortune to support their activities. Thus in 1775, when New Yorkers began to openly organize themselves for revolution, Lewis's record gave him high standing in revolutionary councils. When the Committee of Fifty was chosen in New York City to promote an intercolonial congress to protest parliamentary trade restrictions, the city's mechanics and tradesmen

protested that their interests were not represented. They wanted Francis Lewis on the committee. In an effort to appease these vocal groups, wealthier and more prominent citizens, who were attempting to control the revolutionary movement in New York City, agreed to accept Lewis. The Committee of Fifty thus became the Committee of Fifty-One.

The Committee of Fifty-One approved of the First Continental Congress resolution to boycott British goods. To enforce nonimportation, a new committee of sixty members (called the Committee of Sixty) was elected to succeed the Committee of Fifty-One. Francis Lewis was also a member of this new extralegal association.

When New York's Provincial Assembly refused to send a delegation to the Second Continental Congress in 1775, the Committee of Sixty generated support for a special provincial convention to choose a delegation. Nine of New York's fourteen counties responded to the committee's call. The convention met in New York City on April 20, 1775, and chose twelve delegates to represent New York at Philadelphia. Lewis was included in the delegation. He was now involved more deeply than ever in the growing agitation.

Lewis went to Philadelphia, and as the congressional deliberations progressed, he became more and more conspicuous in committee work. Not known for his oratory, he was, nevertheless, a valued member of several committees, including the Commerce Committee, the Marine Committee, and the secret committee to uncover conspiracies. Lewis's exceptional service on the Marine Committee led to his appointment later as a commissioner of the Admiralty Board. Because of his commercial background, Lewis was frequently charged with duties involving supply of the army. When the proposal to declare for independence came to a vote on July 2, 1776, Lewis, like the rest of the New York delegation, could not vote because instructions had not arrived from New York. Only after the Declaration was ratified on July 9, and after the engraved official version of the document was prepared on August 2, did Lewis add his signature.

Francis Lewis was the first signer of the Declaration from New York to suffer personally for his rebellious act. In October 1776, his estate at Whitestone (Queens) was ransacked by British troops. Almost all of his books and papers were burned. Lewis's wife, Elizabeth, who was in her late fifties and in poor health, was forced to watch the destruction of Whitestone. She was then held

in rigorous confinement for almost a year. The harsh treatment of Elizabeth by the British became public knowledge; Lewis's colleagues in Congress shared his anguish. Luckily, at this point, General Washington personally intervened on Lewis's behalf. In the spring of 1777, Washington arranged the exchange of the wife of a British official and the wife of a New York Tory for Lewis's wife. Elizabeth, who never fully recovered from her confinement, died in 1779, less than two years after her release.

Despite his personal grief, Lewis remained in public service. He had served four years in Congress in 1779. On many occasions during that period, he was the only New York representative attending the congressional sessions. Lewis expressed his deep concern over this situation when he wrote the following letter to New York's Council of Safety on January 7, 1777:

> I lately wrote you by an Express, wherein I informed you that the State of New York was not represented in Congress, nor indeed has it been for several months past, except at small intervals. I am at present the only Delegate for New York at this place, and the members are continually urging me to request you would compleat your representation in Congress, as business is now multiplying upon their hands, and so many Members detached upon Committees etc. that the business in Congress is retarded, add to this that our state sometimes suffers for the want of a Vote in Congress, which I beg you would speedily remedy.

In addition to congressional service, Lewis was a commissioner of the Admiralty Board until July 1781. When he finally saw Whitestone again after the British evacuation of New York City in 1783, nothing but rubble remained. The Revolution deprived Francis Lewis of his home and much of his wealth. He did not rebuild Whitestone, living his remaining years with the families of his sons. Lewis died in 1802, missing by two years the inauguration of his son, Morgan, as governor of New York. In remembering Lewis, Dr. Benjamin Rush, a fellow Declaration signer from Pennsylvania, called him "A moderate Whig, but a very honest man, and very useful in executive business."

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